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HISTORY
OF THE
FIRST CHURCH,
OBERLIN, Ohio.

AN ADDRESS BY THE PASTOR,
REV. JAMES BRAND,
Delivered December, 1876.

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.

1877.
PRINTED AT THE NEWS JOB ROOM.



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NOTE.

To the First Church, Oberlin.

DEAR BRETHREN:— Your kind request that this history might be placed in your hands for publication, I am happy to comply with. Some of the reasons for writing the history of this church at all, are—

1. It has a history.
2. While several, excellent historical sketches of Oberlin College have been published, no history of the church, as such, has been attempted.
3. The early relation of this church to the other churches of Northern Ohio, and to the Congregational body at large, has, in some quarters, not been well understood.

In preparing these pages, no pains have been spared to verify each statement by comparison of the testimonies of living witnesses, as well as by an examination of whatever books and documents could be found bearing upon the theme.

It may be felt by some that certain questions of deep interest have been passed over, and that others have received only a notice quite below their real importance. This is conceded and regretted. But a little reflection will show that the fact is not without reasons. Thus the Doctrine of Sanctification, which has occupied so large a place in this church, could not have been adequately reviewed and set forth without swelling this pamphlet to a volume. Substantially the same may be said of the subject of revivals. It was found that, to give this topic a treatment corresponding to its importance, and one which would be of any practical value, would require quite a pamphlet of itself. These and other themes, therefore, have received, not a special, but only a general historical notice.

The writer acknowledges his indebtedness to Pres. J. H. Fairchild, Prof. James Dascomb, Prof. Henry Cowles, Prof. John Morgan, Prof. C. H. Churchill, Rev. Geo. Clark, Rev. T. J. Keep, and others, for valuable information.

J. B.

Oberlin, April 24th, 1877.

IN EXCHANGE
Oberlin Col.
May 15 '07

HISTORY OF THE FIRST CHURCH, OBERLIN.

The divine method of propagating influence in the world seems to be largely by the mysterious connection of generations. Each generation is a board of trustees who hold in trust the legacy of the past, to be used and handed down with interest to the next following. We are trustees of character, truths, principles, and institutions as truly as of houses and lands. God has appointed a law and a testimony which he commanded our fathers to make known to their children, that the generations to come might know them, even the children that should be born, and that they should arise and declare them to their children, that they might set their hope in God. This duty of transmission seems to be laid upon us by an unalterable decree. As to the fact of transmission we have no option. As to what shall be transmitted, we are graciously allowed to choose. We are bound especially to transmit the good, because we receive our own good largely from the past. "We have dressed ourselves by the help of the wardrobe of the past. We should have been as naked as savages, had not the poets, and sages, the reformers and men of God met us on our way to clothe us in the garments of a Christian civilization." This good that comes flowing in upon us from the past, we are bound to send forward purified and enlarged to those that follow. It is in view of this truth, that we are led naturally, at the close of this Centennial year, to review the history of this church.

ORGANIZATION AND ORIGINAL MEMBERS.

There was religious worship in Oberlin nearly two years before any organized church existed. The first prayer meeting on the ground was in the fall of 1832, and consisted of Rev. John J. Shipherd—the founder of the colony, Philo P. Stewart and Peter P. Pease. The first tree having been felled on the southeast corner of what is now the college green, these three brethren knelt down and prayed the prayer of consecration for the place, and then sat upon the prostrate tree and talked of Christian-fellowship. During the next year, 1833, while the colonists were gathering, and the foundations of the Oberlin Institute were being laid, the people met together for religious service, without any organization—first in the log cabin of Peter P. Pease, then in the “school-room”—an apartment of “Oberlin Hall,” the first building erected by Oberlin College, and which will be noticed in another place. Even in their haste to remove the forest that embosomed them, the people did not think it a waste of time to unite for daily prayer. In those early days when the town consisted of but a few rude dwellings on what are now Main and College streets, it was the custom to ring a large dinner bell, at the center, to call the people together for daily prayer-meeting at five o'clock in the morning. It was also customary when a neighbor built a new dwelling house, instead of the old-fashioned “house warming,” to dedicate the building with appropriate prayer and thanksgiving. In this way many of the first homes of Oberlin were consecrated to the Lord. Thus, the sound of the woodman's ax, the crack of the rifle amid the abundant game, and the voice of prayer and praise, all strangely blended together, are the echoes of forty years ago, which still linger in the memories of the early settlers as they look back from this goodly heritage to the hardships and glory of their pioneer life.

The years 1833-4 witnessed a great advancement; new

settlers poured in, the forests receded, and the necessity for church privileges daily increased. The records of the church read thus:—"Aug. 19. 1834. The brethren and sisters of Oberlin assembled in the school-room, brother J. J. Shipherd in the chair, N. P. Fletcher appointed clerk—Resolved, that a church be formed as soon as may be, and that it be called the First Congregational Church of Christ in Oberlin." Meantime, September 3d, a confession of faith having been drawn up and adopted, and sixty-two persons examined, under the lead of Mr. Shipherd, the people met again in the school-room September 13th, and simply resolved "That those who have been examined and accepted, do now consider themselves as members, and that the church is now legally and completely organized." Mr. Shipherd was appointed to "preside as chairman of their social and religious meetings for the time being." Nathan P. Fletcher was appointed clerk, and Samuel Daniels and Isaac Cummings were chosen temporary deacons. The following month Samuel Daniels and Peter P. Pease were duly elected for one year as the first regular deacons of the church. Thus organized and equipped, under the shadow of the frowning forests, the First Church of Oberlin began its eventful career. It had no ecclesiastical council present at its birth to sanction its existence or bid it God speed, and needed none. A little band of devout men and women in the heart of a great wilderness, felt the need of a church of Christ, that was sanction enough for its existence.

Of the original sixty-two members, we have been able to find only some eighteen or twenty who have not crossed the river. Of these, the following twelve still live in Oberlin: Herschel Reed, Chloe Cummings—now Mrs. Wheat. Eliza Stevens, Fay Hopkins, Sarah Hopkins—now Mrs. Porter, Daniel B. Kinney, Betsey Kinney, Eliza Branch—now Mrs. Clark—and who was one of the first teachers here, Lydia

Turner, Mrs. Janes—now Mrs. Strong, Elizur M. Leonard, and Almira Hamilton. There are several who united with the church from one to six months after its organization, whom God has still spared to us. Among these are Charles Farrar, Hiram A. Pease, Lydia Pease, Prof. James Dascomb, Mrs. M. P. Dascomb, Nathaniel Gerrish, and others.

PRINCIPLES AND AIMS OF THE FOUNDERS.

It is not too much to say that the founders of this church were men and women remarkable for the spirit of self-sacrifice, and a practical and comprehensive faith in God. The tremendous energy and intensity of spiritual life which characterized them, and which was still further developed in the progress of the place, was the outgrowth of the great revivals of Nettleton and Finney which had spread over the land, a few years before. The key to the history of the church, lies in the fact, that, its founders did not aim simply to establish another church in the ordinary sense of the term but to accomplish a reform—to illustrate what they held to be the Gospel idea of a Church of Christ. To this end a strictly Christian school was a necessity. The overshadowing truth under which they lived and moved and had their being, was that of the great needs of the perishing world and the failure of a degenerate church to meet them. Hence, a leading thought in every mind was the conversion not only of hearts, but also of pocket-books to Christ. Every man was to cultivate his lands for God, and "hold no more than he could properly manage for God as his faithful steward. And "yet more," said they. "to increase our means of serving him who has bought us with His blood, we will observe plainness and durability in the construction of our houses, furniture, carriages and all that pertains to us." They were men and women who lived for the future, they saw the need of men as well as means, hence they took special pains to thorough-

ly educate their children, pledging themselves to train them up in body, intellect and heart for the service of the Lord.

With these principles and aims, the church of course was ready to take advanced ground on the great moral questions which were then dividing the nation. The anti-slavery rupture at Lane Seminary forced upon the trustees of the college and the colonists of Oberlin, the question, "Shall students be received here irrespective of color?" The people expressed themselves as willing to "lay aside every prejudice and to do as we shall be led to believe God would have us do." The struggle which ensued in the meeting of the trustees of Oberlin College, which finally decided the momentous question, is described in the following words by Pres. E. H. Fairchild, now of Berea College, Kentucky :

"They were called together again, and met at the house of Mr. Shipherd in his absence. Mrs. Shipherd, engaged in her household duties, often passed the door, which stood ajar, and at length, in her anxiety stopped before it. Father Keep, the moderator, comprehended her solicitude, and, stepping out, informed her that the result was doubtful. She immediately dropped her work, gathered the praying sisters of the neighborhood, and they continued in prayer till the decision was announced. The question was decided in the affirmative by the casting vote of Father Keep. God bless the good old man, now eighty-seven! Thus the rubicon was passed, and henceforth the name of Oberlin was a hissing and a by-word throughout the land."

As a result of this initial step, the church not only excluded slave-holders from its communion, but refused to give letters of recommendation to churches which sanctioned or tolerated slavery.

As an indication of its position on the question of temperance, it may be said that no fermented wines have ever been used at this communion table; a position which even at the present day is occupied by but few churches. The

church has kept up not only a theoretical but a practical and successful crusade upon intemperance from the beginning; and it often recognizes the fact that "there is no discharge in that war."

STATISTICS OF GROWTH.

The success of the church work here has been worthy of its principles. Probably no other church in an obscure village ever had such an enormous growth. It is a fact worthy of notice, that not one communion season since the organization of the church in 1834, has passed without some additions to its membership. Beginning with sixty-two communicants in the solitudes of the forest, it has had, in the space of forty-two years, about 4,660 members—an average addition of a little more than 110 a year during its entire history. The years of most rapid growth were, of course, previous to 1860 when the church held the field almost alone, and when Mr. Finney was in his prime. During the first thirty years the average annual addition of members was about 112. The smallest number admitted in any single year was 35, the largest 360. The period of smallest increase in the whole history was from 1868 to 1872, when the average annual additions went down to about 46. From 1872 to the present time, April, 1877, the average has risen from 46 to 110.

Of course no such growth in numbers could have been possible in a village like Oberlin even with Mr. Finney's remarkable powers, had it not been for the connection of the church with the institution. Many Christian students as well as citizens came here and united with the church by letter, and yet by far the larger part of the four thousand and a half, have been converted here and have united on profession of faith.

Another fact which modifies the result, is the changing character of the population of the place. It would be pre-

mature to infer from the admission of so great numbers that the church was correspondingly large. The same influences that bring such large additions, also necessitate a large number of dismissions. The present membership of the church is 740.

PASTORS.

The first pastor of the church was Rev. John J. Shipherd, who came here from the Presbyterian church of Elyria. He was called to the pastoral office immediately after the organization of the church. Ill-health and the draft of the institute upon him, together with some visions of still other educational enterprises which he yearned to realize, led him to resign in June, 1836. In his letter of resignation, to the church he humbly expressed the conviction that he had not been profitable to them in the ministry, and added, "I can merely pass it off in an ordinary way; which will no more answer for Oberlin than it will do for you to have an ordinary church." His last words are worthy of record, as indicating the intensity of his solicitude for the church and institute to which he had given so much thought and prayer. After expressing his fear that a man fully fitted to take the position could not be found, he said: "Nevertheless, if the colony and institute cannot be bound together, in one fold, under one Shepherd, be sure you settle a man who will encircle the colony with one arm and the institution with the other, holding them as a church in inseparable Christian union."

What Mr. Shipherd was as a preacher does not appear. It is possible that, though the father of the colony, he felt himself, in the pulpit, somewhat overshadowed by the presence of greater men who had come in to take up the work of the school and who were already doing a part of the preaching for the church. While Mr. Shipherd seems to have been a man of great earnestness of heart and persistency of

purpose, as well as profound, practical faith, he seems also to have been a man of visions; better adapted to devise plans and lay foundations, than to prosecute the continuous work necessary to secure permanent results.

The man who could encircle the colony with one arm and the institute with the other, whom Mr. Shipherd charged the church to settle, but who, as he feared, was not in existence, was really at his elbow. Prof. Charles G. Finney was called to take charge of the church in May, 1837, and \$400 a year voted him as compensation for his services. Having other means of support however, he never accepted any salary from the church. He continued as pastor, (though neither he nor Mr. Shipherd were ever installed), from that time till May, 1872, a period of thirty-five years.

This is not the place to enter upon any extended review of Mr. Finney's power as a preacher, devotion as a pastor, or the results of his ministry to the church. Even if our space would admit of it, such an estimate would be superfluous. Mr. Finney, as president, preacher, pastor, author and theologian, has been too recently and too well put before the public, to require more than a mention here. The country is not ignorant of the man or his work, and Oberlin knows his history by heart. Suffice it to say, that as pastor of the church he carried out the grand leading ideas of reform which animated its founders; and that few pastorates have ever been more fruitful of good results, or left more sacred and precious memories behind them. It was probably a great advantage to Mr. Finney that he left New York to enter upon the hardships and self-denials of Oberlin. This field combining church and theological seminary was specially fitted to the bent of his mind and the development of his great powers. Probably in no other place in the country could he have wielded a greater influence. On the other hand,

*It perhaps looked to some as a place
of fame away his great powers in
the back woods. But no. 20*

it was an equally great blessing to the First Church when it and the name of Charles G. Finney became inseparably connected together.

Next to Pres. Finney, and associated with him as assistant pastor through nearly the entire history of the church, and to whom the church owes a perpetual debt of gratitude and love, stands Prof. John Morgan, D. D., whose life God still spares, as a kind of benediction to the people. Dr. Morgan served the church during the long and frequent periods of Pres. Finney's absence, and often at other times—holding himself ready, it is said, to preach at any time on half an hour's notice from Pres. Finney, and bringing the great wealth of his learning, wisdom, and personal devotion, both in the pulpit and out of it, to the edification of the church.

Though the records are almost silent on the subject, it is seen from other sources that Pres. Mahan also occupied a very prominent place as preacher to this church. He preached, however, not as pastor, but as president of the college. Having the natural oversight of the students spiritually as well as educationally, he preached half of each Sabbath for some twelve or fifteen years. He is spoken of as a man of great power and fervency in the pulpit ; and did very much to build up the true spirituality of the people.

Pres. J. H. Fairchild, Prof. H. E. Peck, Prof. C. H. Churchill, Prof. Henry Cowles, and indeed nearly all the members of the faculty have been more or less the instructors of the church. Prof. Cowles, besides occasionally preaching, did much to extend and perpetuate the power of the pulpit by his regular reports of the sermons in the Oberlin *Evangelist*.

PLACES OF WORSHIP.

The birthplace of this church, as we have seen, was the

“school-room,” an apartment 20 by 40 feet in the second story of the building now occupied by Mr. Tuttle’s jewelry store, and which was then “Oberlin Hall.” Here the church remained about a year. During the summer of 1835, the congregation having quite outgrown its accommodations, seized upon the unfinished dining-room of the first Boarding Hall. The first pulpit here, is said to have been a work bench. This room accommodated the church for a season, but overflowing again, they next moved to “Colonial Hall”—a building put up by the joint efforts of colonists and institution. This place, used both for church and college chapel, would seat about eight hundred. Here also in the course of time it became necessary to hold side meetings in the Laboratory and other places, in connection with the regular services.

In the year 1835 the “Big tent,” a gift from New York friends to Mr. Finney, was brought to Oberlin. In the absence of a suitable house of worship, this tent was dedicated to the Lord, and was frequently used for Sabbath services; the students putting it up upon the green Saturday night and taking it down again Monday morning. It was 100 feet in diameter, and from its central pole floated a streamer, on which were inscribed the words “Holiness to the Lord.” When no longer needed here, the tent was used by Oberlin men for the purpose of holding revival meetings in different parts of the state, but its ultimate fate is unknown. The subject of building a house of worship had been under discussion among certain individuals for some years. The manner in which it was finally entered upon is well described in a letter received from Mr. George Kinney who was many years the treasurer of Oberlin College, and an active member of the First Church. He says: “There was one scene connected with building of the First Church which has often stood vividly before my mind. It was the Sabbath before the enterprise of erecting the house was entered upon. The con-

gregation had gathered as usual in the old chapel, then the only place of worship for the whole village. The diminutive house had become packed, and the doors on either side, opening directly upon the walks, were thronged by the anxious multitude, while ushers were passing up and down the crowded aisles trying to compress the people into a smaller compass. Mr. Finney, then in the full vigor of manhood, sat on the low platform eagerly surveying the scene. At last he arose and said "Brethren, the Lord's work in this place demands of us a house of worship that will accommodate the people, and whatever the Lord's work requires of us, *we can do*. We must build a church. Now come together to-morrow at one o'clock, all of you, and we will talk this over, and lay our plans, for *it can be done*."

The next day nearly all the village, men, women and children, came together and after a characteristic prayer by Mr. Finney and a statement from him of his views as to the size and kind of building required, the people entered at once into the work. No one plead inability or even a delay for a more convenient season, although till the day before, very few had thought it possible to build, or even heard the subject broached. Mr. Finney also gave more for the object than any other man.

Perhaps it is not too much to say that, did the necessities of the people require it, the present Oberlin with the same spirit and zeal, could build twenty such houses with no greater sacrifice than was required at that day to build the one."

This was in 1840. A committee was at once appointed, consisting of Rev. George Whipple, late Secretary of the A. M. A., Prof. James Dascomb, Mr. Lewis Holtslander and Mr. Horace Taylor, to take the matter in hand. In 1842 the foundations of the house were laid, though it was not occupied till some time in 1843, and even then it was entered

without being completed, and without any formal dedication. The people were but too glad to be released from their cramped and uncomfortable quarters, to cease their wanderings, and settle down in a permanent church home. The lot where the building stands, together with a lot for a parsonage was given for that purpose by the original owners of the land where Oberlin was built. The house was designed not simply to meet the wants of the church, but also to accommodate the great annual gatherings of the friends of the college. Accordingly it was built large enough to seat 1,800 people, and so wisely constructed that it still stands, as Pres. Fairchild has said, the "finest audience room in the West." The controlling aim of the builders was convenience and durability, not beauty. The interior was modelled, it is said, after the Old Broadway Tabernacle of New York.

To put up such a building at that period of Oberlin's history, was a gigantic undertaking. There were no men of wealth in the community. Almost all the colonists were themselves living in their first rude dwellings. The salaries of the professors were only \$600 a year, and the New York fund for the supply of them having failed, they were largely in arrears. The house, however, seemed to be indispensable to the work of the Lord here, and if so, it must and would be built. The clarion voice and boundless faith of Pres. Finney called on the people to arise and build, and they did. The first subscriptions of the professors were \$200 apiece, and most of them had to double that amount before the work was done. The people generally did as much or more in proportion to their means. The sacrifices they made, look to us at this distance, and under the circumstances, as simply sublime. The people, however, did not seem to think it was anything remarkable. That was what they were here for. In the absence of cash, the building committee received all sorts of commodities, horses, cows, wagons, harnesses, sheep,

hay, grain, cheese, etc., etc., all of which were turned to pay the workmen or to purchase materials. In the book containing the first records of the society, which has unfortunately been lost, are said to be such entries as these: "Brother — was appointed a committee to look after the two cows belonging to the society," other brethren were appointed a committee to see to "working in the students, by classes, as mason tenders;" another committee was to see to "ironing a wagon wood, to be turned out to Mr. Riker to apply on mason work," etc., etc. The poorest persons in the colony claimed the privilege of contributing something. Students also contributed of their scanty and hard-earned means. When neither money nor produce could be spared, men turned out and gave their personal services. One man had lumber prepared for his own dwelling house, and, in the absence of other means, though living in a small log house, he gave his lumber to the church, and has lived in that log house till within a year or two of the present time. One young woman supporting herself by domestic labor while she studied at intervals, brought to the committee (unsolicited) a five dollar gold piece as her first contribution.

Help was also solicited and received from abroad, on the ground that the Church was partly for the benefit of the College. Subscriptions ranging all the way from ten cents to one hundred dollars were thus given by the people outside. The largest sums received were one hundred dollars from F. D. Parish of Sandusky, and fifty dollars from L. J. Burrell of Elyria. Notwithstanding the building cost but twelve or thirteen thousand dollars, and in spite of the struggles at home and the assistance from abroad, it was completed with a heavy debt upon it. This debt was thrown off by subsequently "issuing certificates of stock, bearing interest at six per cent. in slip rent only." Years afterwards this stock was largely bought up by the society, at

a very large discount, or was given outright by the holders. The building standing as it is to-day in excellent condition, speaks for itself; substantial and plain, and unlike most of our modern churches, admirably adapted to the purpose for which it was designed. The basement was intended for college purposes but was found to be too damp for comfort. The room under the organ, however, was long used by the theological department for lectures and recitations, the students finishing it off at their own expense as a compensation to the church.

In connection with places of worship, it seems appropriate that we should notice the church chapels. The first was built in 1863, a plain brick structure, and stood on the west side of the church, but was subsequently taken down to give place to Council Hall. The present beautiful and commodious chapel, of which Prof. Churchill was architect, was erected in 1873, and will doubtless meet the wants of the church for generations to come.

LATER HISTORY.

The church, thus provided with this noble edifice in 1843, went forward in its great work, holding for some twelve or fifteen years longer the entire field alone. Some two years after the organization of the church the original confession of faith was modified, "to adapt it to meet the approbation of all evangelical christians. The doctrines of election and perseverance were omitted, and those of future reward and punishment, and the Christian Sabbath added. The covenant was also amended so as to give liberty in reference to infant baptism. This change was made not because there were many here who objected to those controverted doctrines, or to infant baptism, but to preclude the necessity of the multiplication of churches, and in obedience

to a prevailing conviction that any basis for a church less catholic than Christianity itself, was unscriptural."

It is worthy of note here, that upon the same principle on which the church excluded Slave-holders from its communion in the early days, it subsequently excluded Free Masons; though not with the same unanimity. The subject of Free Masonry was brought to the attention of the church in 1867. After that exhaustive and prolonged discussion which moral questions have always received here, it was resolved by a vote of 180 to 97, "that, in receiving members, if any candidate be connected with this secret organization, we will in the spirit of Christ use all hopeful endeavors to convince him of his error; but, if after such labor, he shall decide to continue *active* connection with it, we will regret his decision, but cannot "bid him God-speed" by giving him the right hand of fellowship and entering into covenant with him." The substance of the argument in favor of this position was that Free Masonry is radically opposed to the spirit of the Gospel, and hence the church of Christ cannot consistently enter into covenant with adhering members of that fraternity. The minority agreed with the majority in disowning Masonry as an evil, but took issue on the policy of exclusion, as being in their view an infringement of Christian Liberty, and as introducing a test of church fellowship unauthorized by Christ.

The subject of Sanctification as generally held in this church has been adequately set forth in pamphlets published by Pres. E. H. Fairchild in 1868, and by Pres. J. H. Fairchild in 1875. Suffice it to say here, that while there were confessedly extreme and unscriptural grounds taken by some few of the students and colonists in the early days, those extremes were rejected by the responsible teachers of the church; and that the general tendency of the instruction on that theme has always been toward a strong middle ground

between antinomian perfection on the one hand, and the old school view of inability on the other—a position in evident accord with the Scriptures, and acceptable to the great mass of those who hold the new school theology. Any abuses or perversions of the doctrine, which may, in isolated cases, have crept in of late years, are the fruit of a literature introduced into Oberlin from without.

The confession of faith of the First Church, quite fairly represents the doctrinal position of its founders and leading men—which is also, a middle ground between High Calvinism and Arminianism. It is not surprising therefore that the multitudes who came here from all parts of the country, and from all Christian denominations, were able to fraternize perfectly with this church. Neither is it surprising that with church accommodations for the whole community, and with a doctrinal basis as broad as the Gospel itself, the people should, during the early years have discountenanced the establishment of other churches in the place. The charge recently made of sectarian opposition to the organization of an Episcopal Church here, seems to be based upon an utter misconception of the facts. The discouragement offered to such an enterprise, if there were any, was not on the ground of prejudice toward an Episcopal Church as such, but on the ground that the existing church was so Catholic as to render other sects superfluous. But when the determination was taken by a few individuals, to have an Episcopal Church, instead of sectarian opposition, the First Church opened its doors to Bishop McIlvaine who, in the absence of any other suitable place, came in and held a regular service in this house, the choir of this church furnishing the music. Neither in the recorded traditions, or existing spirit of the place has the writer been able to find any sectarian prejudice toward any of the denominations established here. We are all on a basis of friendly and happy intercourse. Nevertheless, the prevailing harmony

among the people here for twenty-five or thirty years, and the absence in the community of any sense of the need of other denominations, suggests the question, whether when the basis of union is simply the Gospel itself, and the spirit is that of the Master, the necessity for different sects might not wholly disappear.

THE SECOND CHURCH.

Notwithstanding the organization of other sects here, from 1856 onward, this church once more outgrew its quarters, and in 1860 the spacious building was found to be too small. With a wise christian foresight, the policy of the church was now changed. Instead of again enlarging the seating capacity, it was felt that a greater efficiency would be secured by a division of forces. Harmoniously, and with but one dissenting vote, the division was agreed to. This consummation was reached May 3d, 1860, when an ecclesiastical council convened, and the Second Congregational Church of Oberlin was organized; 112 members going out with reluctance and with the benediction of those who remained. Subsequent events have proved the wisdom of this step. The growing demands of the community have doubtless been better met, and greater efficiency of christian work secured, than could have been attained by one mammoth church. The new organization started out with a doctrinal basis identical with the old, and has grown to nearly equal dimensions. The two have lived and worked together as mother and child should, with one work, one aim, one spirit, one hope, one God and Father of all. As an illustration of the good feeling existing between the two churches, it may be remarked that when the members of the Second Church began to build, some seven or eight years ago, those of them still holding stock in the old house, relinquished their claims—probably to the amount of several hundred dollars—and the members of the First Church, in their turn, generously contributed five thousand two hundred and forty

dollars, toward the erection of a new house of worship for their brethren.

ORGANIZATION FOR CHRISTIAN WORK.

In 1870, when Pres. Finney's strength was beginning to fail, a feeling prevailed among the members of the church, that a more thorough organization for christian work was demanded to meet the needs of the community. Accordingly, the following plan was adopted, and has proved of great value to the church. Several pastors having enquired about this organization, and thinking it may be of value to others into whose hands this history may fall, we insert the constitution entire :

"PLAN OF ORGANIZATION FOR CHRISTIAN LABOR ADOPTED BY
THE FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF OBERLIN, DE-
CEMBER, 1870.

Believing that a primary design of Christ, in the organization of his followers into christian churches, is that they may be associations for christian labor; and therefore that every true christian church is by virtue of its organization such an association; and believing that every member of the church has a work to perform in his Master's vineyard and that each member has his particular work to perform, and that it is the duty of the church to seek to enlist and engage every member of the church in some form of christian activity. Therefore,

Resolved, That as a means to this end we adopt the following plan of organization:

ART. 1. The town shall be divided into ten sections.

ART. 2. The church shall appoint annually of its members a number corresponding to the number of sections, to constitute the superintendents, or leaders of the sec-

tions, in christian work. The candidate for this office in each section to be nominated by the section, by ballot. The appointment by the church to be at the church meeting on the Friday afternoon succeeding the nomination. The leaders to hold their office until the time for the next annual election.

ART. 3. The Section Leaders, shall together, constitute a Board of Christian Work. Any number of leaders not less than four shall constitute a quorum.

ART. 4. The Pastor of the church shall be ex-officio president of the Board.

ART. 5 A vice-president and secretary shall be elected by the Board annually, by ballot, to hold their office during the year.

ART. 6. It shall be the duty of the Board to put in operation all means it shall deem suitable to bring into active and efficient service, the whole talent of the christian brethren and sisters in the church, and in co-operation with christians of other churches to bring the entire population residing within the geographical limits of the church, under religious influences.

ART. 7. The Board shall have power to modify from time to time, the sectional boundaries, if the people residing within these boundaries wish it.

ART. 8. The Board shall meet monthly for consultation, the hearing of reports from the sections, and for the transaction of such other business as may come before them.

ART. 9. It shall be the duty of each Section Leader, to make a thorough examination of his field, to ascertain what work needs to be done. He shall keep a memorandum or schedule of the work. He shall

keep a roll of all the members in his section ; ascertain who are at work, or are willing to work, and aid them in selecting such a portion of the work as they shall seem fitted to do ; and endeavor to interest and engage all the members in some form of christian labor.

ART. 10. The Section Leaders may appoint as their Helpers, one or more of the brethren or sisters in each section.

ART. 11. If there shall not be a sufficient number of laborers in any section to meet the demand, they may be obtained from other sections from which they can be spared.

ART. 12. It shall be a special duty of the Section Leaders to see that all suitable means are used to sustain prayer-meetings in their sections, and to make them interesting.

ART. 13. Each Section Leader shall make a full written or verbal statement monthly, of the religious condition of his section, for the use of the Pastor and of the Board.

ART. 14. The time for the annual nomination of leaders shall be the first Sabbath in January, notice of which shall be given on the previous Sabbath.

ART. 15. Any section failing to obtain a leader at the regular time for election, or which may, for any cause, have been deprived of its leader, may secure the appointment of one at any regular meeting of the church, provided the nomination and appointment of the candidate be in accordance with Article Second of this Constitution ; his term of service to expire at the time of the next annual election.

ART. 16. This Constitution may be altered, amended or repealed by the vote of a majority present at any regular meeting of the church, notice having been given on the previous Sabbath, of the proposed change."

REVIVALS.

One of the marked features of this church is that it has been blessed with an almost continuous revival. This has arisen from the nature and power of Mr. Finney's preaching on the one hand, and from the great number of young and impressible minds, gathered here for purposes of education on the other. Almost every term witnessed the conversion of great numbers of students, till it came to be a proverb that no one could remain in Oberlin without becoming a christian. Rising, however, above this general level of spiritual power, there are scattered all along the history of the church many "great awakenings." One or two of these may be referred to in passing. Perhaps the most powerful and extensive occurred in 1850. Mr. Finney was at the time in England, engaged in revival work there. Feeling himself surrounded with prejudices awakened by the foreign correspondence of theological opponents in this country, he wrote, imploring the church of Oberlin to pray for him and his work. They did so, and their prayer was "returned into their own bosom." From the gatherings here to pray for souls in England, there came upon the people a sense of their own need, and thus began one of the greatest works of grace ever witnessed here. Rev. Geo. Clark, one of the first graduates from the Oberlin Theological Seminary, and a successful Evangelist, was invited to take charge of the work. Through ten weeks he preached and held other meetings daily, awakening, arousing, convicting, directing sinners, till, by the blessing of God, more than three hundred—mostly students—were converted to Christ. This was followed by a similar work, though not so extensive, in 1851-2, on Mr. Finney's return.

The church records show still another unusually large ingathering in 1863. Then came what is still spoken of as

the "great revival" of 1866, which was characterized by its remarkable power among the people of the town, as well as among the students. At this time one of the chief instrumentalities in God's hands was a business men's prayer-meeting, established in a central place, where young and old gathered together day after day, till nearly the whole business community were brought to the Savior.

THE SUNDAY SCHOOL.

The Sunday School work here is of earlier date than the church. It is greatly to be regretted that the early records of the work were lost some years ago. Persons still living, however, say that the Sunday school began in the house of Mr. Pease, afterward moving on from house to house, and from strength to strength, as the colony grew, and keeping pace in influence and numbers with the church itself. The first mention made of the Sunday school, to be found in the church records, is in January, 1836, when a committee was appointed "to consider the best way of conducting the Sabbath school, and to solicit funds for its support." A similar committee was appointed the following year for the same purpose. Mr. Finney, it would seem, could give little or no attention to the Sabbath school, but there were not wanting abundant and competent workers.

From 1834 to 1843, we find the following list of superintendents: Edward H. Fairchild, now president of Berea College, Ky., William P. Cushman, Cyrus W. Wallace, John Dodd, Oliver D. Hibbard, John W. Alvord, Prof. Geo. Whipple and Nelson W. Cook. In 1843 Mr. Cook was succeeded by James Mason Fitch, who was the real father of the Sunday school work in Oberlin. This is evident from the single fact that when he took the school, in 1843, it numbered only about one hundred and five scholars, and in 1859 it numbered more than five hundred and fifty. Mr. Fitch

was a man admirably adapted to his work, and remained in office till his death, in June, 1867.

Mr. J. B. T. Marsh, who had for some time been assistant superintendent, then took charge of the school for about one year, when he was called to Chicago, and Prof. G. W. Shurtliff was elected in his place, with E. J. Goodrich as assistant. Prof. Shurtliff served only a few months, being compelled by other duties to resign, and Mr. Goodrich was soon after chosen superintendent of the school with Edward P. Johnson assistant. This arrangement continued till the division of the school in 1870. Up to that time, though the Second Church had existed for ten years, there was but one Sabbath school—the two churches meeting together Sunday mornings in the old home, for the instruction of their children. Since that time they have pursued their separate ways, Mr. Goodrich holding the office with the affection of the school and the confidence of the people unto this day.

One or two incidents connected with Mr. Fitch's administration are worthy of record. Mr. Fitch was one of the thirty-seven citizens of Oberlin and Wellington who were indicted by the United States Court in December, 1858, for aiding and abetting the rescue of a fugitive slave, who had been "clandestinely abducted from Oberlin." Though but two of the thirty-seven were convicted, quite a number of the Oberlin men refusing to yield or compromise, were incarcerated in the Cleveland jail eighty-five days. Mr. Fitch was one of that number. During this painful experience his beloved Sunday school of Oberlin visited him *en masse*. A writer in one of the papers of the day says: "One of the most touching of scenes occurred on Saturday, July 2d, when four hundred Sabbath school scholars applied at the jail to see their superintendent. Month after month they had looked toward his wonted place for him in vain, a place from which he had not been so long absent for sixteen years;

and now, no longer patient, they came trooping like little angels, as they were, and beat their very wings upon the prison door." Then follows a long account of the day's exercises and incidents, from which we take but an extract or two. "At the head of the procession which was conducted by Prof. J. M. Ellis, and which was marched through the streets of Cleveland, accompanied by a band of music, was a splendid banner, inscribed as follows:

THE OBERLIN SABBATH SCHOOL,

J. M. Fitch Superintendent,

"STAND UP FOR JESUS."

"Them that Honor me I will Honor."

"FEED MY LAMBS."

The children pressed anxiously on to the jail, and soon the throng of little feet pressed the prison floor; and the various rooms, stairways, halls and cells were filled. Each one was anxious to grasp the hand of one of the men, of whom Judge Wilson impiously said, "They are not good christians." In the afternoon the children listened to speeches from Mr. Fitch and others. Mr. Fitch's closing words were these: "Do right! always do right! nothing shall by any means harm you if ye be doers of that which is right." Glorious words from a man in prison for doing right!

The feelings and sentiments of the Sunday school are still further indicated by the letters which reached Mr. Fitch in prison, from the children. One writes thus: "We still think you did right in doing as you did. We think it is doing a great deal of good in the Sunday school as well as in other places. I think there are many of your scholars trying to follow in the footsteps of their blessed Savior. I for one am trying to serve the Lord. I feel willing to do

any thing that Christ would have me do. We will continue to think of you and pray for you as long as God gives us breath. "Blessed are they that are persecuted for righteousness sake for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." — your scholar." One little colored girl, trying to appreciate the sacrifice her superintendent had made for her race, writes: "I have thought of this passage of scripture for your encouragement, "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you and say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake." Rejoice and be exceeding glad for great is your reward in Heaven." — *W. H. Knoblauch, Oberlin, Ohio, to his wife.*

No history of this church would be complete without a history of the choir. It has worked nobly in connection with the pulpit, and can rightfully claim a share in the glorious results of these forty-two years of church life which we have been reviewing. *W. H. Knoblauch, Oberlin, Ohio, to his wife.*

There were several excellent singers among the original colonists. Dea. Thomas P. Turner was usually leader. The choir however, was not organized till 1835. Mr. E. P. Ingersoll afterwards Prof. Ingersoll, was the first chorister. In 1836 he resigned and left Oberlin. Mr. Geo. N. Allen, a student at the time, was then elected chorister. He is regarded as the Father of the Oberlin Choir. A musical genius himself, he threw his whole being into the work of organizing and drilling the musical talent of the place. The Sabbath music of those days is spoken of as being hardly second in religious impressiveness to Pres. Finney's sermons. All through its history Pres. Finney was in the habit of making the choir a special subject of prayer. The voluntary frequently melted him to tears, while at other times he would beg the Lord to check in the singers any bad and wicked spirit that had got hold of them. Once

ambitious tendencies to display. In 1841 Mr. Allen became Professor of Sacred Music in the college, and about the same time the choir was legally incorporated so as to hold property, and began the collection of a valuable Musical Library. In the absence of an organ, Prof. Allen led the singers with a violin, and organized quite a full orchestral accompaniment.

In 1849, during Prof. Allen's temporary absence, Mr. C. H. Churchill then a theological student, was appointed chorister. He occupied the position during the following two years, till his graduation, when it was resumed by Prof. Allen. In 1859, Mr. Churchill returned to Oberlin, as professor, and Prof. Allen again resigned the leadership to him. In 1854 the organ having been purchased, Geo. W. Steele became the first organist. By means of concerts given at various times, which obtained for it a reputation, the choir became quite a financial help to the church and college. It paid for putting gas fixtures into the church, helped to pay for the organ in 1854, contributed liberally to the purchase of the college bell, &c. &c. In 1860 the choir was divided between the First and Second churches, and the "Musical Union" formed of the two, has had the same delightfully helpful and benevolent habit as the old choir. In 1863 Mr. J. P. Morgan returning from Germany, declined the leadership of the choir, but rendered Prof. Churchill very great assistance by taking the position of organist. In 1868 Geo. W. Steele, now a graduate of Leipsic, was elected professor of music in the college and leader of the choir. In 1870, on Prof. Steele's resignation, Prof. Churchill again took charge for a year, and was succeeded by Prof. J. R. Severance. During 1872 the choir was led by Mr. Thomas A. Hall, a theological student. In 1873 Mr. Wm. Chamberlain was elected and served until last Aug., when Prof. Severance was a second time appointed and still serves. This choir is said never to have been troubled with those chronic jars and

difficulties which afflict most choirs; and the reason must lie in the two facts that it has always required good moral character as a condition of membership, and that its meetings for rehearsal have always been opened with prayer—facts which ought to be true of every church choir in christendom.

GENERAL INFLUENCE.

As to its general influence in the country, we need to guard against attributing to the church, as such, what belongs to the institution. And yet the whole institution for nearly thirty years was in the bosom of the church, and during that time, the preaching from this pulpit did, perhaps almost as much toward making the men who have gone out from here, as the course of study, or the college influences by which they were surrounded. The First Church has been from the beginning a missionary church. It felt that its work was largely to raise up men who would go to the “waste places.” Accordingly, we find its members going out in large numbers to the fields already opened, and some of them opening new fields for themselves. Rev. David S. Ingraham, one of the first graduates here, with his wife went out and established a mission among “the recently freed inhabitants of Jamaica,” others, to the number of nearly a score, accompanied or followed him. Some fifteen or twenty, we know not how many more, have gone to Africa. Several to Hayti; a number to the Indians; others to the colored fugitives in Canada; and home missionaries without number to the interior and far west. The antislavery sentiments entertained here led to the espousal of the freedman’s cause at the South, by this church, as peculiarly its own. Among the leading men in that work, from this church, are the late Sec. Whipple and the present Secretaries Strieby and Cravath.

The silence of the American Board on the subject of

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slavery; its employment of slaveholders as missionaries; and the soliciting of funds from the slaveholders, at a time when it seemed to the Oberlin people that a high christian position was imperatively demanded, led to a lack of interest here, in that society for several years. As one of the early members affirms, "it was with grief that we felt called upon to rebuke the carnal policy of this, and some other, societies, with which we loved to act, because they refused to treat the sin of slavery as they did other sins." These societies, however, finally came over to antislavery grounds, and the church is now in hearty sympathy with them.

Add to the missionary work and spirit of the church, the great number of teachers who have gone out from its bosom, carrying education and religion together, to the remotest corners of the land; the preachers who have accepted the old gospel with a new baptism, and went forth preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ; the long list of college presidents and professors who are still standing at their posts in the educational centers of the great West; the men of note in the political arena; the men of learning who have remained here to train this mass of mind for its work, and we cannot avoid the conclusion that no other church on the continent has had in the same length of time, so wide a spiritual influence. And when we think of the struggles through which the First Church has passed, struggles with the gigantic forests, struggles with pinching poverty; struggles against the prejudices of men; when we remember the purposes that have animated it, and the causes with which it has been identified, in the last forty years, of the history of this country, and the kingdom of Christ, we feel that the pardonable pride which the early colonists take in their career, and of which they have sometimes been good-naturedly accused is at least not surprising. The church has doubtless had its faults, but on a great multitude

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ENT TO LEAVE THE CHURCH OR TO DISMEMBER IT, OR OF ITS MEMBERS AND THEIR WORK, GOD HAS MANIFESTLY SET HIS SEAL.

RELATION TO THE COLLEGE.

The Church and College, though having no organic connection, have always sustained the most intimate relation to each other. They were born together and being one in aim and spirit, neither can be separated from the other without loss. The glory of the one is the glory of the other! The colonists came here not to live upon the college, but to help the college live. Accordingly, "they pledged themselves to make the interests of the Oberlin Institute identical with their own." This pledge has been generally kept. The students have clived to the Christian families of the church; become identified with their interests, partaken of their spirit, knelt with them at their family altars, and gone with them to the house of God. In the early days, one or two of the deacons of the church were quite generally chosen from among the students. To one looking on from without, this thought rises spontaneously to the lips. The First Church can never afford to recede from that noble attitude assumed in the tenth article of the Colonial Covenant, to make "The interests of the Oberlin Institute, identical with its own." And the Institution cannot afford to cut loose from the early ties, the traditions, and sacred memories which bind it to this historic church.

RELATION TO CONGREGATIONALISM.

This church came into existence at a time when the denominational sky of Northern Ohio was already full of mutterings and storm. Like others of those days, the Oberlin church, though Congregational, united with the Cleveland Presbytery under the then decaying influence of the famous "Plan of Union." It does not appear that that plan was ever really approved by the church, but it did not wish to

stand alone, and the founder of the colony, and most of the leading men here, were connected with Presbyterian bodies. Under the plan of union which had then been in operation some thirty-four years, a set of influences, probably unforeseen by either party at the beginning, was slowly but surely bringing all the churches under Presbyterian rule. If this influence could have carried over the hearts and convictions of the people with the organizations, the evil would have been little or nothing. But such was not the case. The anomaly presented was simply this: a people, in some sense, compelled to work under an ecclesiastical system with which the great majority of them did not sympathize, and in which they did not believe. The time had come, therefore, when many *felt* that Congregationalists must either give up their principles and be absorbed in the Presbyterian body, or take some step that looked toward liberation. Accordingly, in 1836, the Oberlin Church withdrew from the Presbytery, and together with nineteen others organized the "General Association of the Western Reserve." The statement made at the time that this was an "Oberlin movement," appears to be substantially correct, though the Oberlin men modestly declined the honor. True, it was a movement of the lay brethren of the churches, but the doctrinal basis of the Association originated at Oberlin, and is identical with the creed of the First Church as it now stands. The men, also, who led in the movement and carried its burdens all through its history were many of them here. It is well-known that a period of distressing schism among the churches of the Reserve followed the organization of this Association. The charge was made on the one hand, that the Oberlin church alone was responsible for all the bitterness and separations that followed; on the other hand, a counter charge was made by Oberlin, that

those divisions resulted from Presbyterian "aggressions upon the legitimate rights of Congregational churches and ministerial brethren." This can be settled only by an appeal to facts previous to Oberlin's existence.

It is well known that the Western Reserve was settled chiefly by New England people, and that the great majority of churches were Congregational. Rev. Thomas Barr, himself a Presbyterian, affirms that "in nine-tenths of the churches, there were no real Presbyterian members, and at the time of constituting the Grand River Presbytery, 1814, he did not recollect a single church within its limits that was truly Presbyterian, except the church at Euclid, his own." With the exception of eight years, from 1804 to 1812, the ministers were largely Congregational, though not as overwhelmingly so as the communicants. Under these circumstances we should naturally look for the organization of Congregational associations, which the plan of union itself indeed contemplated; but instead of that, every effort in that direction being opposed by the Presbyterian brethren and generously waived by the Congregational, Presbyteries came to be organized instead. To these bodies, Congregationalists were at first, as a matter of friendly intercourse, invited to send delegates. Next the Presbyteries gave advice to the Congregational churches. Then they invited them to bring their church books, which the delegates did, to be examined by the Presbytery. Thus Presbytery came to be "a court of revision." By this process, little by little, the Congregational churches came under Presbyterian control without any real change in the convictions of the great mass of the people. So far had this process proceeded before Oberlin was founded, that five Presbyteries were organized on the Reserve and not one Congregational body. Every man who came to labor here was expected to join the Presbytery. It was claimed

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finally, that Presbyterians had the ground, and that no minister had a right to promote Congregationalism. Those who did, were denounced as innovators and schismatics.

Such was the condition of affairs when this church came upon the stage of action in 1834. It was compelled—
Presbyterian as many of its leaders were—either to take sides with the Presbytery and give up Congregationalism altogether, or against the Presbytery, for a course of activity, at once freer and more in accordance with the genius of the people, and their controlling ideas of reform. They chose the latter, and the die was cast.

Now, these facts indicate that Oberlin was in no proper sense the cause of the troubles that followed the year 1836. The real cause was in operation before Oberlin had an existence. The movement with which this church became identified and in which it became the leader, though for a time apparently making matters worse, was really the first healing influence upon the disease which had been rankling in the blood of the people for years. Unquestionably, there is now laid a foundation for wholesome harmony and union, which could never have been attained under the old regime. The difference in the course pursued by the two parties was this: Oberlin undertook to remove the cause of the trouble; her antagonists the symptoms: the former would cure the distressed patient by cutting out the cancer, the latter, by tonics and trituration. In addition to these things, there were two causes which account for much of the bitterness felt toward the Oberlin church in the Congregational movements which followed its organization. These were abolitionism and new school theology. At the South the pulpit was silenced by the slaveholders, all who opposed them being threatened, scourged, or driven out. At the East, Boston and New York were held in

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terry by proslavery mobs. The church in New York, over which President Finney was then pastor, barely escaped with their lives through the courage and foresight of Oberlin's best friend, Lewis Tappan. In 1834, by means of the antislavery rupture at Lane Seminary and the consequent accessions here in 1835, Professors Morgan, Finney, Cowles, and Mahan, Oberlin became avowedly pronounced in its antislavery sentiments. Closely consequent upon this, says Professor Cowles, "the attitude of Presbyterians on the Reserve towards Oberlin became unfraternal, repellent and exclusive." The action at Lane Seminary was followed by proslavery mobs; the destruction of the antislavery press at Cincinnati, O., and at Alton, Ill.; and the murder of Rev. E. P. Lovejoy. While these things were occurring through the country, the Presbyterians, who were mainly opposed to antislavery agitation, began to tighten still more their ecclesiastical grip. The right of churches to choose their own pastors, without regard to Presbytery, was denied them. Even the fundamental principle that the majority shall rule, was resisted, it being held by some Presbyteries that even a small minority adhering to the Presbytery, was the church. This, in its turn, produced uneasiness and stimulated the spirit of revolt among the laity. So high did the feeling run, that when two Oberlin graduates, who had been brought up in the bosom of the Presbytery, and were well known, asked to be examined for license to preach, they were denied the privilege, and Oberlin denounced as a "curse to the world." These same young men are to-day the Presidents of Oberlin College, Ohio, and of Berea College, Kentucky.

Again, the grasp with which new school theology was held here, also did much to characterize the Congregational movement on the Western Reserve, and to bring Oberlin into prominence. The old school party in the Presbyterian

church had been for some time branding the new school divines as heretics. Dr. Lyman Beecher was put on trial for new school views in 1835. Professors Finney, Morgan, Cowles and Mahan were all connected with Presbyteries and might also, at any time, be forced away from the work here by the same authority that controlled others. This, practically, placed the interests of Oberlin at the mercy of the old school power. There was really, therefore, no path open for men who believed in Congregationalism, new school theology, and the emancipation of the slave, but that of independence in relation to the Presbyterian body. That course was chosen here, however, with great moderation, some of the leading men even declining to unite with the Congregational Association till its eighth annual meeting.

The result of the Oberlin movement upon Congregationalism in Ohio may be summed up in two points.

1. It gathered up, encouraged and consolidated churches which under the old system were dying out. Many to-day are becoming self-supporting and efficient, which, without that would have had no existence.

2. That movement, while it finally failed to meet the growing demands of the churches of the State, doubtless paved the way for the organization of the Congregational Conference of Ohio in 1852. The beneficent results that have followed the latter organization, says the Congregational Quarterly for April, 1863, "are due largely to the Oberlin Theological alumni, who went into the ministry intelligently devoted to the church polity of the pilgrims. Out of two hundred it would not be easy to find one who has swerved from these good old paths."

POLITICAL ATTITUDE OF THE CHURCH.

A single glance must be given to the political relations

of the church to the country at large. This building has never been devoted simply to the proclamation of the gospel on the Sabbath. The members of the church seem to have felt that righteousness is not an attribute of the brick and mortar composing the house, but of the men who built it. They were not, therefore, afraid of its desecration by being put to more secular uses. The house has always been open for the discussion of every moral question which man needs to understand. It has been the rallying place where, in mass meetings, all conceivable questions of interest have been discussed, but especially the great political issues of the nation from the early antislavery times, down to the campaign for Hayes and Wheeler. The political attitude of the membership may be understood from such sentiments as these: "Patriotism a part of religion." "Loyalty to God and loyalty to government when it is loyal to God." "We mean to teach our children," said Prof. H. E. Peck, "to respect law and its ministers, but we also mean to teach them that they will not be dutiful to the State, if they do not hold her to duty to God, and that they will be traitors, if they obey a law which breaks the law of Heaven." The courage with which these sentiments were held, is illustrated in the resolutions passed by this same Prof. Peck and his fellow prisoners upon leaving the Cleveland jail, where for opposition to the fugitive slave law they had languished for eighty-five days. When release came, and before leaving the prison, having rendered thanks to God for his mercy, they unanimously adopted this resolution: "That after all the pains and penalties inflicted upon us by government officials in the attempt to enforce the fugitive slave act, we feel it to be our duty to say, that our hatred and opposition to that unjust and unconstitutional law are more intense than ever before. No fine or imprisonment however enforced, by whatever court, can induce us to yield it obedience.

We will hereafter as we have heretofore, help the panting fugitive to escape from those who would enslave him, whatever may be the authority under which they may act.

A little incident is related illustrative of the way in which these principles were carried out. A slave mother with a large family of children, including a little orphan boy, given her by another slave mother on her death bed, was delayed in her flight, at Oberlin, by the sickness of the little boy. At first she would not leave him, but, finding that her master was in immediate pursuit of her, she was hurried on to Canada; and the ladies here took care of the sick child. In a few days he died, and the funeral, which occurred on Sunday afternoon in this church, is said to have been so affecting, that there was hardly a dry eye in the house. Father Keep and Prof. Peck conducted the exercises. A few Sabbaths later a dime collection was taken for the purpose of buying a stone to put over the little grave.

It would be pleasant here to mention some of the scenes of profound interest witnessed in this church during the war of the rebellion; how the early principles inculcated here had prepared the people to bound to the front when the country called for troops, and to lay their sons on the altar of sacrifice that the slave might be freed and the nation saved. But all that, of course, is not peculiar to Oberlin, but is the common glory of every loyal community. Perhaps the most thrilling meeting ever held within these walls, was that of July 6. '59, when those prisoners "for righteousness' sake," before referred to, were welcomed home from jail. They were met at the cars by the whole population of the place, headed by Prof. James Monroe, now Member of Congress, who said to them: "you have made no compromises with slavery, there has been no bowing down of the body, no bending of the knee; erect as God made you, you went into prison, erect as God made you, you have come out of prison." After the address the heroes were escorted by the

people with music and flying banners to the "great church," where the meeting was organized. The venerable Father Keep was chosen President, and his ringing words for human freedom and the supremacy of the divine law, gave the key note to the meeting. Speech after speech of welcome and congratulation, response after response from the returned prisoners, all breathing intense devotion to country, humanity and the higher law, coupled with opposition even unto death, to the fugitive slave act, held the immense audience spellbound from early evening till the small hours of the night. A deep religious feeling pervaded the assembly as they sat, now burning with indignation at the wrongs of the slaves, now bathed in tears at the recital of prison experience and the tender reunions of divided families, now hushed in silence, and now thunderous with applause! After these old walls had echoed and reechoed thus with eloquence and song, till past midnight, the people were again melted to weeping by the closing prayer of Dr. Morgan, "whose great and noble heart," says the reporter, "reached out toward all, and he prayed that the day might soon dawn when all the world should be free, and when in all the earth should be found not one enslaved family nor one enslaved soul!"

Established and to exist till the final overthrow and

flight of the **CONFEDERATE** **REBELLION**

Such a history as this fills the mind with a multitude of emotions, prominent among which is thankfulness to God. The present generation here has, indeed, a rich legacy from the past. If ever a church was established for the purpose of evangelizing the world this one was. And as we stand in the midst of this transition period, seeing on the one hand the men of God who laid the foundations, gradually vanishing from our view, and entering into their rest; and on the other, the great problems and responsibilities of the future opening before us, these absorbing questions press

imperatively for reply: Are we true to our trust? Are the men of to-day meeting the duties of to-day as the fathers met theirs forty years ago? Is the old spirit gone?

It is of course perilous to institute comparisons, but in view of the facts before us, we make the following suggestions:

1. The aim and spirit of the fathers have not departed. The great and good men and women who have prayed and struggled here, have left a legacy which their children are not going to cast away. Circumstances, forms, methods must of course change with the progress of years. It is well they should. But the old purpose and principles remain; and even a casual observer would not fail still to detect here, great energy of spiritual life. The rock on which we are planted is the "Rock of ages." What has been said of the college, may be said with equal truth of this church. "There have been changes, but none such as to separate the present from the past in identity of character."

2. We shall do well to remember that we cannot live upon the virtues and heroisms of the past. Circumstances here are now so different that the lives of the founders, if minutely reproduced would not meet the demands of to-day. We are bound to transmit christian character and institutions. But after all, it is not those of the fathers but our own, that will most directly concern posterity. As individuals, we too, shall soon have passed away. If we have any noble aims, any high aspirations from the past, we are to speak them out, put them on record, and send them down the fields of time that the gleaners of the next generation may find something that the reapers of this have left. But our supreme duty to the future is to enable our children to begin not where our fathers, or where we began, but where we left off. We owe it to them to leave behind us, in spirit,

principles and institutions, that which will adequately express our last and best attainments.

3. There is no call here for any new departure. The mission of the church is to be what it has been. What the world needs is still God-like men and women. The great wants of the nation that so deeply impressed the founders of this church still continue. The wonderful progress of the last forty years, has scarcely altered even the aspect of the country's demand upon the church of Christ for consecrated service. The three great causes to which this church devoted itself in the past were the emancipation of the slave, the emancipation of the drunkard and the conversion of the heathen to Christ. These will still be the great absorbing questions of the future. Slavery as a system has passed away, but the work of the church for the slave is not done. There never was an hour in antislavery history, when the negro needed more christian help than to-day. A half century to come will hardly put his cause beyond solicitude. The danger is that we shall have been found adequate to the breaking of his shackles, but not equal to guiding and sustaining him amid the perils of freedom. Governments can abolish slavery, but only intelligence and Christ can make men free. The future of the temperance cause in America is also still in obscurity. The liquor interest is better organized than ever before. "It holds the balance of power and cracks its whip effectually over both political parties."

But the cause which more than any other is to call for consecrated christian patriots in the future, is that which grows out of the tremendous influx of heathen to our own shores. While immigration from Europe may have reached its climax, that from China, India and Japan has just begun. Brahminism and Boohdism are to join hands with infidelity

in America. It is possible that the great struggle with heathenism is to be, not in Africa or Asia, but on this continent. Here christians must unite and pagans will. Then will come the death grapple in which they shall triumph, with whom is the Lord God Almighty. These questions can be met so far as we are concerned, only by the old spirit adapted to the new circumstances. To be faithful to our trust, we must still, like our fathers, stem the tide of worldly opinion when that opinion is opposed to holiness of life, and still hold fast the gospel principles of economy, simplicity and selfdenying love.

APPENDIX.

1ST. CONFESSTION OF FAITH.

ARTICLE I. We believe that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are given by inspiration of God, and are the only infallible rule of faith and practice.

ARTICLE II. We believe in one God—the Creator and Ruler of the Universe, existing in a divine and incomprehensible Trinity—the Father, the Son Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost—each possessing all divine perfections.

ARTICLE III. We believe in the fall of our first parents, and the consequent entire apostasy, depravity, and lost condition of the human race.

ARTICLE IV. We believe in the incarnation, death, and atonement of the Son of God; and that salvation is attained only through repentance and faith in his blood.

ARTICLE V. We believe in the necessity of a radical change of heart, and that this is effected through the truth, by the agency of the Holy Ghost.

ARTICLE VI. We believe that the moral law is binding on all mankind as the rule of life, and that obedience to it is the proper evidence of a saving change.

ARTICLE VII. We believe that credible evidence of a change of heart, is an indispensible ground of admission to the privileges of the visible church.

ARTICLE VIII. We believe that the ordinances of

Baptism and the Lord's Supper, together with the Christian Sabbath, are of perpetual obligation in the church.

ARTICLE IX. We believe in the resurrection of the dead, in a future judgment, the endless happiness of the righteous, and the endless misery of the wicked.

2d. THE COVENANT.

You do now, in the presence of God, of angels, and of men, solemnly avouch the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, the one only living and true God, to be your God. You receive the Father as your Father, the Lord Jesus Christ as your all-sufficient and only Redeemer, and the Holy Ghost as your Sanctifier. Professing unfeigned sorrow for your past sins, and renouncing all ungodliness and every worldly lust, you do now freely, and in the fixed purpose of your heart, give up yourself, soul and body, with all that you have, to be the Lord's—promising to walk before Him in holiness all the days of your future life.

You receive the brethren in Christ as your brethren, and his friends as your friends; and promise to watch over them with all christian fidelity and tenderness.

You do also submit yourself to the government of Christ in his Church, and to the regular administration of it in this church in particular. You also covenant to walk in communion with your brethren, not only whilst you continue to be members of this church, but also in all other places where, in the providence of God you may be called to reside, and where the ordinances of the gospel may be maintained; endeavoring to promote divine worship, and christian love and fellowship, by all the means of Christ's appointment, and within your power.

And, finally, you engage to live as humble christians, in the regular and faithful attendance upon the worship and ordinances of Christ in this place, and in the performance

of all your solemn engagements to God and your brethren, until by death or otherwise regularly removed.

All this you solemnly engage, to do, in humble dependence upon the grace of God.

(*The church will rise, and the Pastor will say :*)

“We, also, on our part, covenant and promise to watch over you, seek your purity, peace, and edification ; and so far as in us lies, to advance your spiritual interests.”

3d. THE CHURCH DEBT.

Since these pages were written an event has occurred which shows that the church still holds the spirit of “pocket-book consecration” exhibited in early days. A debt of \$6,500 had been hanging over the church since the building of the new chapel and purchase of the new organ. The subject of liquidating this debt was presented from the pulpit March 25th, 1877. The people responded with their old time enthusiasm. Through the earnest endeavors of Rev. T. J. Keep and others as committee of the society, the way was prepared for a successful effort on the next Sabbath morning. The time usually occupied by the sermon was given to the taking of subscriptions, and \$5,750 were raised on the spot; the choir, of some eighty members, giving \$300 unsolicited. During the following week the remainder of the sum required was more than made up, and on Sunday morning, April 8, the announcement was made to a very happy people that they had *no church debt*.









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